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# The Triennial Comprehensive Report on Immigration

Part V

International Impacts

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## Selected Economic Impacts of International Migration

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## Introduction

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) prepares estimates of four categories of international transactions (see Table 1) related to nonimmigrant and immigrant flows: travel expenditures in the United States by foreign visitors, their related passenger fares paid to U.S. carriers, education services to foreign students, and personal remittances by foreign-born residents in the United States to persons abroad. Travel, passenger fares, and education are major components of rapidly expanding exports of U.S. services, collectively accounting for more than 40 percent of the annual totals in FYs1990-1995. Personal remittances abroad by the foreign-born population in the United States are a major component of private unilateral transfers. BEA does not project economic activity for future years.

TABLE 1.—Selected U.S. International Accounts and Components<sup>1</sup> (millions of dollars)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
U.S. service exports	147,477	163,810	177,305	186,119	195,839	210,590
Travel exports	43,007	48,385	54,742	57,875	58,417	61,137
Passenger fares - exports	15,298	15,854	16,618	16,611	17,083	18,534
Other private services - exports	39,193	46,598	49,291	53,436	59,071	61,724
Education	5,126	5,679	6,186	6,738	7,175	7,517
Private remittances and other transfers, net	14,602	15,920	15,696	16,736	19,506	20,696
Personal remittances from the United States	8,395	9,051	9,437	10,190	10,934	11,846

<sup>1</sup> Account estimates appear in Table 1 of the international transactions presentation in the July 1996 issue of the Survey of Current Business: Services-line 3; Travel-line 5; Passenger fares-line 6; Other private sectors-line 9; and Private remittances and other transfers, net-line 32.

## Travel and Passenger Fare Exports

Travel exports include aggregate purchases of goods (food and gifts) and services (lodging, recreation/entertainment, and local transportation) by foreign residents visiting the United States for less than 1 year for business or personal reasons. Expenditures by Canadian and Mexican visitors include border transactions that often involve short stays (some less than 24 hours). Passenger fare exports are fares received by U.S. operators for transporting foreign residents between the United States and a foreign country and between two foreign countries.

The method for estimating both travel and passenger fare exports combines data on the number of foreign travelers to the United States as provided by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), with average expenditures/passenger fares developed from the travel surveys conducted by the Tourism Industries Office of the International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Travel exports increased from \$43.0 billion in 1990 to \$61.1 billion in 1995. Passenger fare exports increased from \$15.3 billion in 1990 to \$18.5 billion in 1995. The three countries with the largest number of visitors to the United States in 1995 were Japan, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

## Education Exports

Foreign students are defined as individuals enrolled in institutions of higher education in the United States who are not U.S. citizens, immigrants, or refugees. The value of these students' tuition, room and board, and living expenses are recorded as private service exports. Population totals and characteristics are obtained from annual surveys of accredited U.S. institutions conducted by the Institute for International Education. These data are matched with average tuition/room/board expenditures compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, to arrive at estimates of total education exports.

Education exports increased from \$5.1 billion in 1990 to \$7.5 billion in 1995. Students from Japan, China, Taiwan, and South Korea accounted for approximately 35 percent of the foreign student population in the United States during the 1990-1995 time period. Foreign students from India and Canada were also significant during this period.

## Personal Remittances Abroad of the Foreign-Born Population

Personal remittances abroad by the foreign-born population in the United States are a major component of private unilateral transfers in U.S. international accounts. Remittance estimation is the aggregated product of three variables that are specified by country of nativity and duration of stay in the United States: population (converted to family units), average family income, and income propensity to remit abroad.

Foreign-born population levels and associated socioeconomic characteristics are obtained from the decennial censuses of 1980 and 1990, which identify population totals, family totals, and average family incomes by country of nativity and by duration of U.S. residency (in 5-year intervals). Annual interdecennial flows are based on data from the INS and the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. These data are combined with remittance/income relationships of the foreign-born population (arrayed by country of nativity and 5-year intervals of U.S. residency) that were estimated from income and remittance questions on a sample survey of legalized aliens conducted by the INS for 1987 activity and a follow-up survey of the same sample conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor for 1991 activity. The source data and survey results support the following broad conclusions: a significant number of families do not remit, even for recent immigrants; the proportion of income remitted is significantly higher for persons from developing countries than from developed countries; the proportion of income remitted is highest in the initial years of U.S. residency and drops sharply thereafter; and the proportion of income remitted is higher for single foreign-born persons than for foreign-born persons with family in the United States.

Remittances increased from \$8.4 billion in 1990 to \$11.8 billion in 1995. More than 60 percent of remittances went to the countries of Central America, the Caribbean, and South America, but the influx of immigrants from Asia, the former Soviet Union, and Oceania increased remittances significantly to these areas during the period from 1990-1995.

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## The Foreign Policy Impact of Immigration

### Abstract

Immigration issues continue to play an important role in the foreign relations of the United States. U.S. immigration laws have traditionally been generous, supporting family unification and providing a source of skilled laborers. Because of its democratic style of government and sound economic opportunities, the United States has long been the favored destination of large numbers of immigrants, and their participation in the fabric of American life has strengthened the relationships between their native countries and the United States.

Many countries strongly support a generous U.S. immigration policy, which provides an outlet for workers and professionals unable to find employment at home. Immigrants to the United States tend to send a portion of their earnings to family members at home, thereby providing an important source of foreign exchange as well as a stimulus to the growth of the local economies. As a result, many foreign governments pay close attention to U.S. immigration law and policy, and often lobby aggressively for liberal immigration benefits.

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## Western Hemisphere

The United States continues to be a magnet for immigrants from the Western Hemisphere. The relative geographic proximity and increasingly close economic relationships between the United States and its hemispheric neighbors have continued to promote immigration in recent years. The Western Hemisphere consistently accounts for the largest volume of immigration, by far, from any region of the world.

Civil unrest, weak economies, and occasional official or unofficial local government encouragement to emigrate help lengthen the immigration queues, especially from Latin America and the Caribbean. The growth of immigrant communities in the United States coupled with family-based immigration categories further increases the attractiveness of the United States as a destination country. Emigration serves as a safety valve to reduce social pressures in certain sending countries. Remittances to their homelands from legal and illegal immigrants are a significant source of foreign exchange for many home economies.

In the 1980's, between one-quarter and one-third of foreign adoptions by American citizens originated in the Western Hemisphere. Volume peaked at more than 40 percent in 1990 but has since declined both in actual numbers and as a percentage of the world total. Those numbers are expected to decline further in the foreseeable future as adoptions increase in other parts of the world.

The employment-based immigration categories established by the 1990 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) provide for the admission of greater numbers of skilled workers and smaller numbers of unskilled workers than previously. Persistent economic difficulties throughout our hemisphere that pressure workers, especially unskilled ones, to seek more promising employment opportunities in the United States sustain a tension between our immigration policies and the emigration interests of our neighbors. If public support of immigration wanes, as now seems likely, this tension may well increase, moving immigration higher on our bilateral agendas with several countries.

### Mexico

Mexico, with a population of 90 million and an annual growth rate of nearly 2 percent, provides more legal and illegal immigrants to the United States than any other nation. More than a third of its population is less than 15 years of age and 80 percent is less than 40. Nearly 1 million Mexicans are awaiting authorization for immigrant visas in numerically limited categories that are over subscribed. So long as significant disparities in wages and job opportunities remain among the U.S. and Mexican labor markets, permanent or seasonal migration to the United States will continue to have strong appeal to Mexicans. Naturally enough, most illegal aliens from Central and South America, and increasingly from other countries as well, enter the United States from Mexico.

Immigration is a key bilateral issue between our two countries. While the United States seeks greater cooperation from Mexico in curbing the flow of illegal migrants, Mexico would like the United States to increase immigration numbers for Mexicans. Passage of Proposition 187 in California, which sought to limit benefits to illegal immigrants, struck a raw nerve in Mexico. The passage of Proposition 187 came at a particularly awkward time for the Mexican government, which presided over a severe slump in the Mexican economy.

The U.S.-Mexico Binational Commission is a cabinet-level body that meets annually to address issues of concern to both sides of the border. Its Working Group on Migration and Consular Affairs maintains a regular dialogue on immigration issues. A Border Liaison Mechanism was recently established to encourage regular, working-level contacts between U.S. and Mexican consuls and other government officials along the border to manage potential friction points before they become major problems.

The Immigration Act of 1990 (IMMACT90) spurred a major increase in immigrant visa demand by Mexicans. The Act provided immigrant visa authorizations for spouses and minor children of persons who benefited from the legalization programs of the 1980's, most of whom were Mexican.

## Haiti

Immigration has long been an important issue in our bilateral relationship with Haiti, the most impoverished nation in the hemisphere. After the military coup in 1991, the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince ceased issuing immigrant visas for a year. In-country refugee processing was initiated in February 1992 for Haitians who claimed political persecution. Immigrant visa operations were once again halted in August/September 1994 when all international flights to and from Haiti were suspended as part of the U.N. sanctions against Haiti. At various times, thousands of Haitians risked their lives in unsafe seacraft in attempts to sail to Florida.

The United States moved to stem the flow of migrants and to save lives on the high seas by rescuing migrants who refused return to Haiti and providing them with a safe haven at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station. At the same time, the use of U.S. visas by members of the regime was prohibited under Section 212(f) of INA. The subsequent U.S. military intervention, resulting in President Aristide's ultimate return to power, ended the exodus. Since the resumption of immigrant visa issuance in October of 1994, residents of Haiti have once again been offered the opportunity for safe and legal emigration.

## Dominican Republic

Immigration to the United States by Dominicans has grown to record levels. In a nation of just 7 million inhabitants, nearly 40,000 receive immigrant visas each year. Unknown thousands more come to the United States illegally. In a May 1992 poll, 65 percent of Dominicans said they would leave their homeland if the trip did not risk their lives. Forty-two percent said they desired to leave the Dominican Republic regardless of the risk. The younger and poorer the respondent, the more likely the will to emigrate. The vast majority of Dominicans coming to stay in the United States join a thriving, if poor, Dominican community located primarily in the northeastern United States.

The growth in migration and the involvement of some immigrants in illegal activities have caused increasing concern over immigration patterns from the Dominican Republic to New York and Puerto Rico. The presence of Dominican narcotics traffickers in the United States has influenced our bilateral relationship; we have sought the cooperation of Dominican authorities to help control the movements of traffickers and illicit narcotics revenues between our two countries.

## Cuba

Immigration is one of the few areas in which the U.S. government and the Cuban government have a formal bilateral agreement. The original agreement was signed in 1984 in the wake of the Mariel Boatlift. Since that time, immigrant visa and refugee processing at the U.S. Interests Section at Havana (USINT) has frequently been affected by the overall state of U.S.-Cuba relations. The Castro regime has alternated between obstruction and facilitation and has not hesitated to play the "migration card." In the summer of 1994, the Cubans stopped enforcing restrictions on departures. The resulting outflow of rafters into the Florida straits led to a new agreement that guaranteed that a total of 20,000 immigrant visa, refugee, and parole applicants would be processed at Havana and admitted to the United States each year and resulted in a new U.S. policy of returning rafters to Cuba (after asylum screening).

The issuance of immigrant visas averaged fewer than 2,000 per year from 1988-1994. The in-country refugee program, which had been expanded from the original program for long-term political prisoners to include human rights activists, members of persecuted religions, and others with a well-founded fear of persecution, processed 3,000 refugees in 1994. Under the 1994 agreement, immigrant visa and refugee cases will be augmented by parolees, some of which will be selected in a special lottery to reach the 20,000 annual minimum.

Before 1990, few Cubans were able to apply for nonimmigrant visas. That year, the Cuban government began easing restrictions on foreign travel. The result was a sharp increase in the number of nonimmigrant visa applications at USINT. Because many Cubans attempt to use the nonimmigrant visa as means of permanent entry into the United States, the nonimmigrant visa refusal rate is quite high.

## Canada

Canadian and U.S. immigration officials have a history of close cooperation on immigration problems. Like the United States, Canada is a major immigrant and refugee resettlement country that also faces the serious problem of controlling the entry of an unprecedented wave of illegal immigrants and individuals seeking asylum, many with spurious claims. Recently, the Canadian government passed new comprehensive legislation that reforms Canadian immigration policy. In particular, the new legislation streamlines asylum processing. The Canadians have been very interested in European efforts to standardize asylum policies and have suggested similar efforts be made in North America. Canada and the United States have a continuing dialogue on asylum and immigration issues of mutual concern, particularly the question of how to reduce “asylum shopping.”

## Europe

### Portugal

Since Portugal’s inclusion in the European Union (EU), the Portuguese economy has made impressive gains and unemployment has held steady at just over 4 percent. Emigration from mainland Portugal has remained flat while emigration from the Azores has declined. However, immigration is still a significant issue in our relations.

Although an EU member, it appears unlikely that Azoreans will immigrate in any large numbers to Europe in the foreseeable future; family connections to the United States continue to be strong. While Azorean regional officials have discussed their concerns about immigration with members of the U.S. Congress, national-level officials rarely broach the subject in formal conversations. Portuguese officials raised questions regarding Portugal’s exclusion from the AA-1 program. However, Portugal does participate in the successor immigration lottery program, the Diversity Visa (DV) Lottery.

As a member of the EU, Portugal is sensitive that it does not, as yet, qualify for the Visa Waiver Pilot Program. The nonimmigrant visa refusal rate remains too high for Portugal’s inclusion.

### Poland

Immigration issues have long been of major concern in Poland because of strong family ties with the Polish community in the United States. The elimination of travel restrictions in the post-Communist era, coupled with continuing difficult economic conditions as the country works to convert to a market-based economy, have kept demand for immigration to the United States high.

Poland benefited from the NP-5 lottery program and was a major beneficiary of the AA-1 transition diversity program, second only to Ireland in the number of visas issued. Beginning in FY1995, the AA-1 program is being replaced by the DV program, and Poland is a major beneficiary of the 55,000 visas authorized annually under the program. There was a great deal of interest in DV both in Poland and in the Polish community in the United States, even though the law limits each country to a maximum of 3,850 visas. However, if present immigration trends from Poland continue, Poland will no longer be eligible to participate in the DV program. Continuing Polish interest in immigration is also reflected in the high refusal rates for nonimmigrant visa applications at our posts in Poland.

## Ireland

Developments in U.S. immigration law are of major importance to both the Irish government and public, and are a frequent topic in official discussions and parliamentary debate. Emigration patterns have been closely linked to Irish economic conditions. Legal immigration to the United States increased from 902 in 1981 to more than 10,000 in 1990, and the trend has continued upward. It is likely to decline somewhat with the end of the AA-1 program.

Ireland has benefited from several programs designed to increase diversity among the immigrant population to the United States. During the NP-5 program, which ran from FYs1987-1991, Ireland received 18,563 of the total of 52,239 visa numbers allocated under the program. Under the AA-1 program, which ran in FYs1992-1994, Ireland was allocated 40 percent of the 40,000 annual total of visas allocated. Under the new DV program, Ireland did not receive any preferential treatment, but demand is expected to remain strong.

Illegal Irish immigration also has been heavy and attracts high public interest in Ireland. The amnesty provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 enabled very few Irish residents to legalize because most did not enter the United States until the late 1980's. However, many Irish illegals were able to take advantage of the NP-5 and AA-1 programs.

## Russia and Commonwealth of Independent States

Since the demise of the Soviet Union, increased freedom of travel has become standard in most Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. The number of Russian visa applicants has risen dramatically, yielding long lines at our Embassy and Consulates. Because of the uncertainty of the economic and political situation in Russia, many applicants are unable to qualify for visas. This has resulted in a number of complaints from the Government of Russia.

In the CIS countries, visa demand remains relatively low, though it will likely begin to increase as the political situation becomes more stable, and the economies begin to prosper.

The United States continues to operate a major refugee resettlement program from the former Soviet Union (up to 45,000 admissions from the former Soviet Union in FY1994) in categories of religious minorities prescribed by statute and other individuals of concern.

## Bosnia

A Bosnian refugee admissions program was established in FY1993 for Bosnians of special humanitarian concern to the United States. Those eligible are vulnerable Bosnian Muslims referred for resettlement by United Nations' High Commission on Refugees, such as former detainees, torture victims, and women victims of violence, as well as Bosnian Muslim relatives of U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, asylees, or refugees. Up to 10,000 Bosnians were expected to be admitted to the United States as refugees in FY1994.

## Middle East

Immigration to the United States from the Gulf States is limited, primarily involving expatriate guest workers and professionals whose immigration to the United States has no bearing on U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) bilateral relations. In the wake of the Gulf War, most GCC countries reduced the numbers of guest workers from other Arab states and repatriated many of those from countries that had either supported Iraq outright or were considered sympathetic to Baghdad.

In Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, depressed economies continued to create pressures for emigration, particularly to the United States. The return home of Egyptian, Jordanian, and Palestinian guest workers from the Gulf further added to this impetus. The exodus of Lebanese during the 16-year civil war continued to

have derivative effects, as family members joined “anchors” already in the United States. Iraq’s lifting of a 10-year travel ban on its citizens allowed Iraqis who had long since qualified for immigrant status to process their cases.

Terrorism by radical Islamic groups, especially the World Trade Center bombing in New York, and concerns about the potential for future acts of terrorism resulted in stricter security measures in the screening of immigrants worldwide. These measures included improved name check capabilities at overseas U.S. missions.

Israel faced problems integrating the huge influx of immigrants from the former Soviet Union into Israeli society. Many have subsequently sought onward emigration to the United States, to the concern of the Government of Israel.

The number of Iranian refugees has declined, with only about 800 admissions in FY1994. Post-Gulf War refugee processing for Iraqis continued in Turkey and processing posts in Europe, and from camps in Saudi Arabia. The ceiling for the Middle East/South Asia region for FY1994 was 6,000.

## South Asia

Emigration from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh continues at high levels. While many immigrants from South Asia arrive bearing family- or employment-based visas, illegal immigration through identity or document fraud remains significant.

In India, explosive economic growth in certain sectors, especially the computer industry, has sparked an ever-rising demand for employment-related nonimmigrant visas as the Indian computer sector develops links with its U.S. counterpart. Although such visas do not immediately bestow U.S. permanent residence on the bearer, in practice, many such visa holders subsequently adjust status to U.S. permanent residence and eventually become U.S. citizens. Large numbers of Indian students coming to the United States for university education also eventually adjust to U.S. permanent resident status. The movement of Indian computer experts and students comes in addition to well established immigration patterns generated by natives of India already in the United States, thus maintaining immigration from India at significant levels.

Similarly, immigration from Pakistan continues unabated. Nearly all classes of Pakistani society, from the wealthiest landlords and cash-rich businessmen to upper middle class professionals and those with any marketable employment skills at all, think in terms of emigrating from Pakistan. Children of some of Pakistan’s most influential political families live abroad, and some high-ranking civil servants have U.S. or British permanent resident status. Moreover, there are large numbers of unemployed and underemployed young men and women in Pakistan, even those with some technical and professional skills, who are eager to seek better prospects outside Pakistan.

The admissions program for Afghan refugees ended in FY1993.

## East Asia

### China

In the wake of the June 1989 events in Tiananmen Square, President Bush issued Executive Order 12711 on April 11, 1990. That order allowed Peoples Republic of China nationals who were present in the United States on or after June 5, 1989, through April 11, 1990, to remain in the United States and not be forced to return to China against their will before January 1, 1994. The Chinese Student Protection Act of 1992 permitted approximately 54,000 Chinese nationals to apply for adjustment to permanent resident alien

status during a 12-month period beginning July 1, 1993. That law accorded beneficiaries status in the employment third-preference classification (for skilled workers) and subjected them to the statutory worldwide numerical limit on immigrants in that preference.

Before June 1989, Chinese students had already become the largest foreign student population in the United States. The experience of our Embassy in Beijing and consulates general in Guangzhou, Shanghai, Chengdu, and Shenyang is that Chinese students generally prolong their stay in the United States as long as possible, first exhausting all educational opportunities and then seeking legal means to adjust status.

China posts are seeing a dramatic increase in fraudulent employment-based nonimmigrant visa applications. Guangzhou reports that many applications in this visa category are based on fraudulent or nonexistent businesses, fraudulent job offers, or are from applicants who do not have the requisite experience for the petitioned employment.

The link of Chinese organized crime to Chinese alien smuggling has been of particular concern to a number of government agencies. Efforts to engage the Chinese government and other countries with known staging areas for smuggling Chinese into the United States have increased significantly since 1990.

Changes in Chinese adoption law in 1991 and 1992 resulted in a steadily increasing number of Americans traveling to China to adopt infants. Initial disagreements among Chinese ministries fighting for the lead in adoption issues tangled many adoptive parents in bureaucratic red tape. The Chinese government finally shut off foreign adoptions completely while they worked out internal disputes. Foreign adoptions have resumed, and Guangzhou now issues more adoption visas than any other post worldwide.

## Hong Kong

Hong Kong reverted to Chinese sovereignty on July 1, 1997. A special immigrant visa program established by Section 124 of IMMACT90 provided immigration opportunities for Hong Kong-based employees of U.S. firms. The law was to permit applicants to use the visas as a safety net, requiring them to have immigrated before January 1, 2002. Unexpectedly, the program did not generate the interest its drafters had anticipated. With 36,000 visas available during the 3-year period, only 7,626 of these special immigrant visas were issued.

## Indochina

The protection and resettlement of Indochinese refugees remains a significant concern of U.S. policy toward East Asia. The United States is working closely with both first asylum and resettlement nations and with the UNHCR to resolve the situation of the remaining Indochinese refugees in the first asylum countries in Southeast Asia and Hong Kong. Under the Comprehensive Plan of Action adopted by the 1989 International Conference on Indochinese refugees, the United States and other resettlement countries have pledged to resettle newly arriving asylum seekers who are determined to be bona fide refugees. The Comprehensive Plan has been successful in dramatically reducing new arrivals and facilitating voluntary repatriation. Most of the U.S. caseload of Vietnamese refugees in the first asylum camps of Southeast Asia and Hong Kong will have been admitted by the end of FY1994, leaving only a small residual caseload to be completed in 1995. The U.S. Orderly Departure Program (ODP) from Vietnam is a major area of cooperation between our two countries, allowing for the processing of former reeducation camp prisoners, former U.S. Government employees, former employees of private U.S. organizations, and Amerasian refugees, for resettlement in the United States. Immigrant visa beneficiaries are also processed under the ODP. Up to 45,000 Vietnamese were expected to be admitted as refugees in FY1994.

If the United States and Vietnam normalize relations, the resulting business and trade will continue the flow of Vietnamese immigrants at a lower but steady rate. The large Vietnamese American community presents an opportunity for business contacts. It also represents a continued impetus for immigration as Vietnamese Americans seek to bring their relatives to this country. One can also expect some Vietnamese Americans traveling to Vietnam to marry Vietnamese citizens and start a new round of immigration for their spouses and

eventually in-laws. These two trends of immigration and business, each contributing to the other, will tie the two nations closer together and make each a more significant concern for the other's foreign policy.

## Africa

Although immigration to the United States from Africa has risen somewhat in recent years, Africa nevertheless accounts for a relatively small percentage of immigrants to the United States. Just three countries—Nigeria, Ghana, and Ethiopia—are the source of more than two-thirds of all immigrants from Africa. There has also been considerable interest from these countries in the DV program.

Political upheavals throughout the continent have created large populations of displaced persons who are eager to take advantage of available opportunities to emigrate to the United States, whether through family-based immigrant visa petitions or through refugee or asylee status. In addition, government officials and rebel leaders from several African countries have strong family connections in the United States, sometimes causing friction as immigration benefits gained through family relationships come into conflict with U.S. foreign policy considerations.

U.S. refugee admissions for Africa have remained at about 7,000 a year. These are primarily Somalis, Sudanese, Liberians, and Ethiopians. Most of the processing is carried out in Kenya.